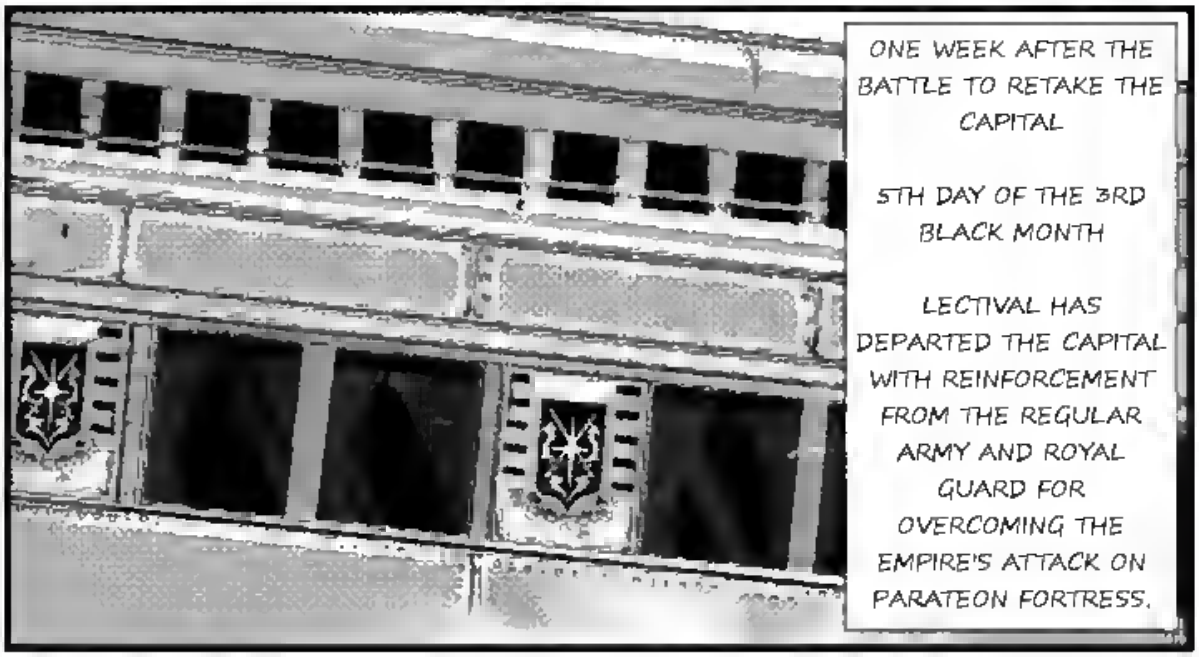
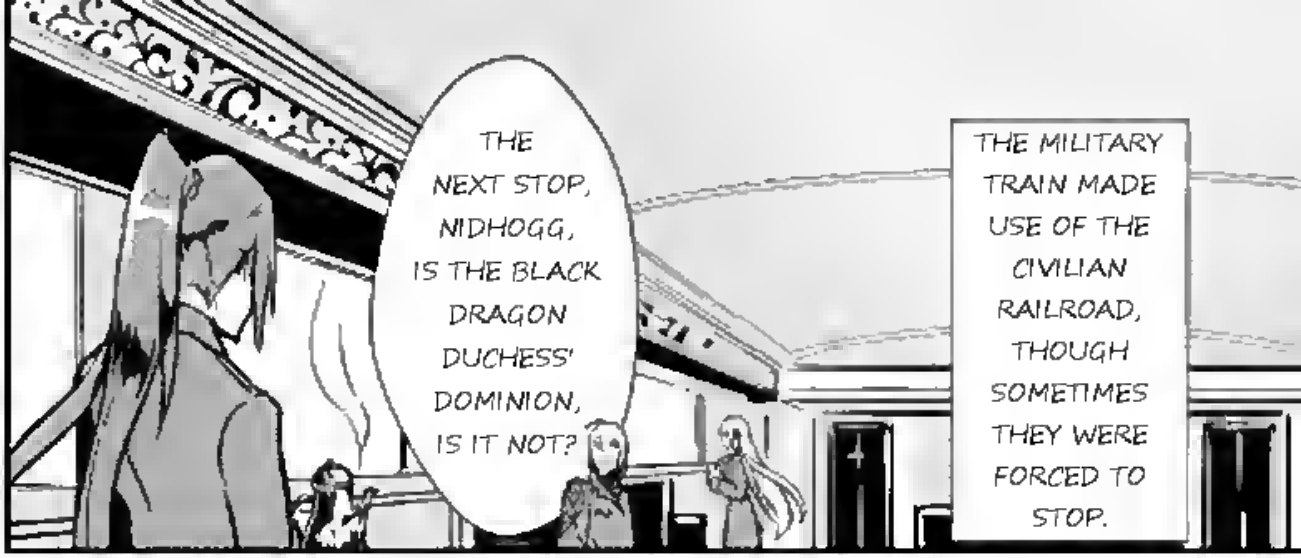
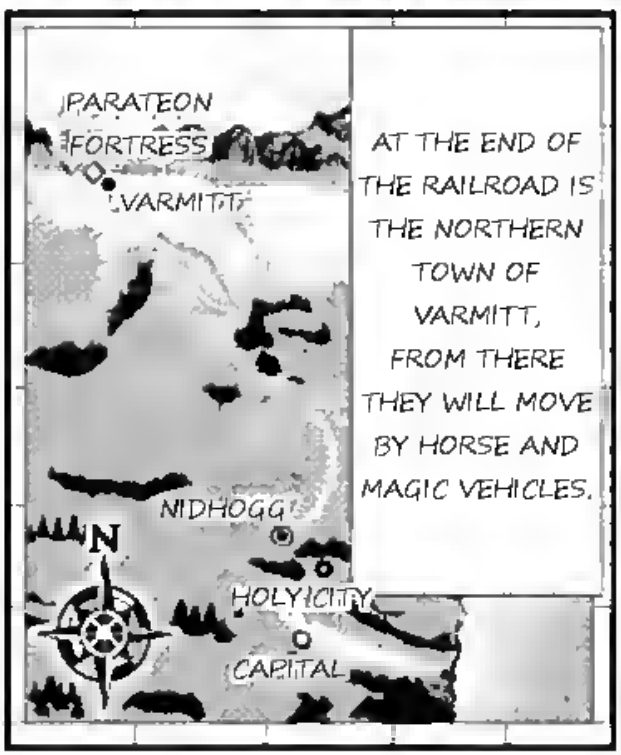
白の皇国物語 第十五回
原作：白沢戌亥／漫画：不二まーゆ

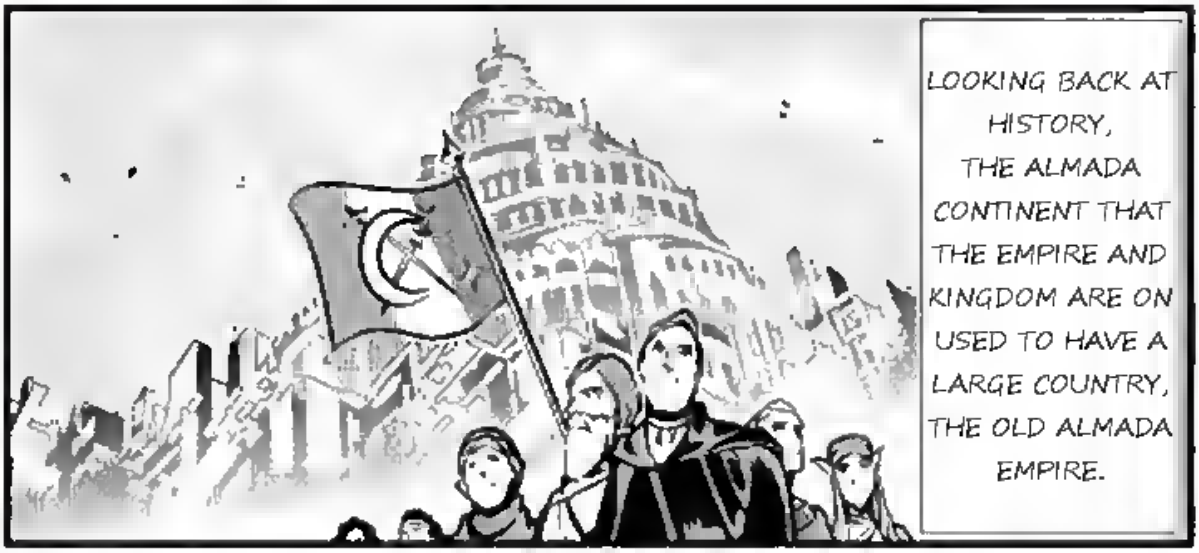

ONE WEEK AFTER THE BATTLE TO RETAKE THE CAPITAL
5TH DAY OF THE 3RD BLACK MONTH
LECTIVAL HAS DEPARTED THE CAPITAL WITH REINFORCEMENT FROM THE REGULAR ARMY AND ROYAL GUARD FOR OVERCOMING THE EMPIRE'S ATTACK ON PARATEON FORTRESS.


THE NEXT STOP, NIDHOGG, IS THE BLACK DRAGON DUCHESS' DOMINION, IS IT NOT?
THE MILITARY TRAIN MADE USE OF THE CIVILIAN RAILROAD, THOUGH SOMETIMES THEY WERE FORCED TO STOP.

BECAUSE THE DISTANCE FROM THE CAPITAL TO PARATEON FORTRESS, SITUATED NEAR THE BORDER WITH THE EMPIRE, IS FAR GREATER THAN THAT BETWEEN THE HOLY CITY AND THE CAPITAL, TAKING THE TRAIN IS THE BEST OPTION.
YES, I WAS THINKING IT WOULD BE NICE TO GREET DUCHESS ANASTASHA WHILE WE'RE THERE.
ARE WE STOPPING FOR ADJUST-MENTS AGAIN?


PARATEON FORTRESS
VARMITT
NIDHOGG
N
HOLY CITY
CAPITAL
AT THE END OF THE RAILROAD IS THE NORTHERN TOWN OF VARMITT, FROM THERE THEY WILL MOVE BY HORSE AND MAGIC VEHICLES.

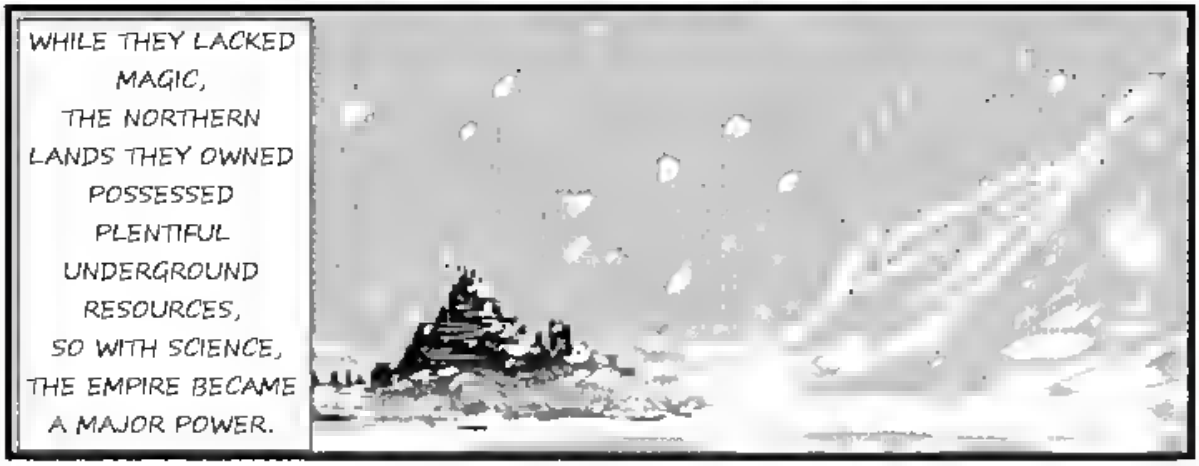
SURE, THIS IS A GOOD CHANCE TO VISIT VARIOUS TOWNS.


LOOKING BACK AT HISTORY, THE ALMADA CONTINENT THAT THE EMPIRE AND KINGDOM ARE ON USED TO HAVE A LARGE COUNTRY, THE OLD ALMADA EMPIRE.

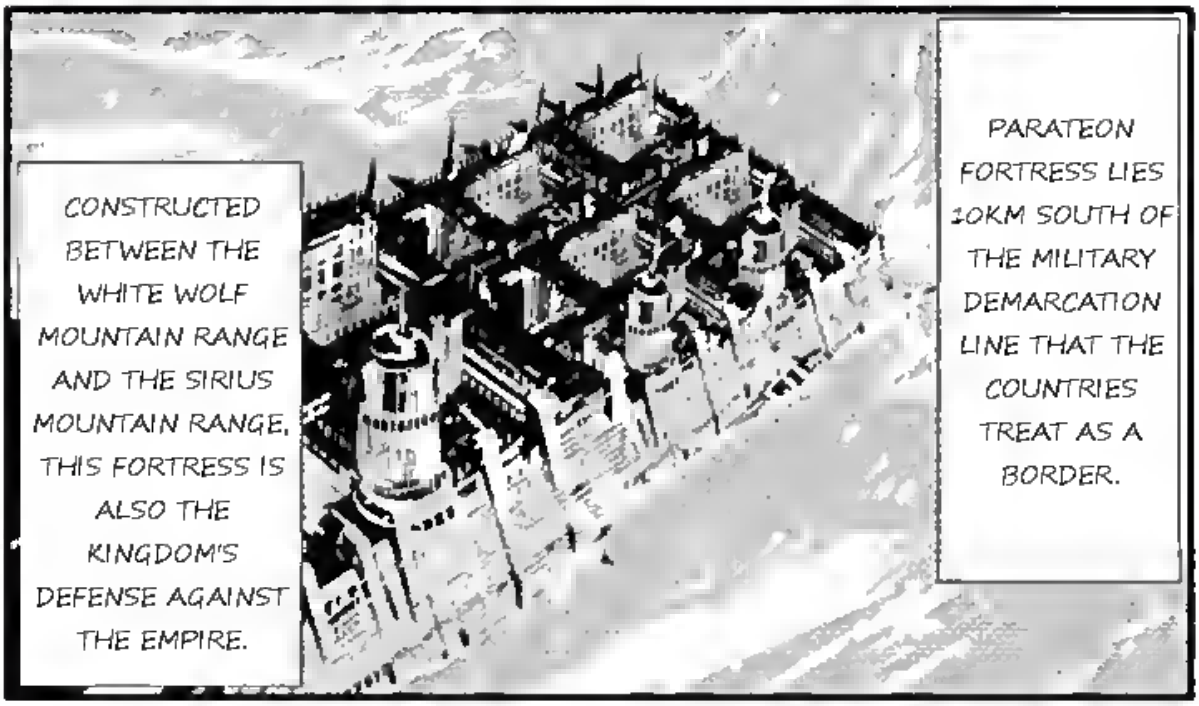
THE "WHITE HERO" LED THE PEOPLE AND FORMED THE ALTODESTENIA KINGDOM, ALSO CALLED "THE WHITE KINGDOM".
HOWEVER, THIS OLD ALMADA EMPIRE COLLAPSED ABOUT 2000 YEARS AGO.

CALLING THEMSELVES THE SUCCESSORS TO THE OLD ALMADA EMPIRE, THEY BELIEVED IN THE SUPREMACY OF HUMANS, AND REFUSED TO SEE DRAGONS, BEASTMEN, AND OTHER RACES AS PEOPLE.
THERE WERE SOME PEOPLE, HOWEVER, WHO DIDN'T LIKE HOW THE KINGDOM TREATED ALL RACES EQUALLY, AND ABOUT 300 YEARS AGO, THEY FORMED THE NEW ALMADA EMPIRE IN THE NORTHERN LANDS.

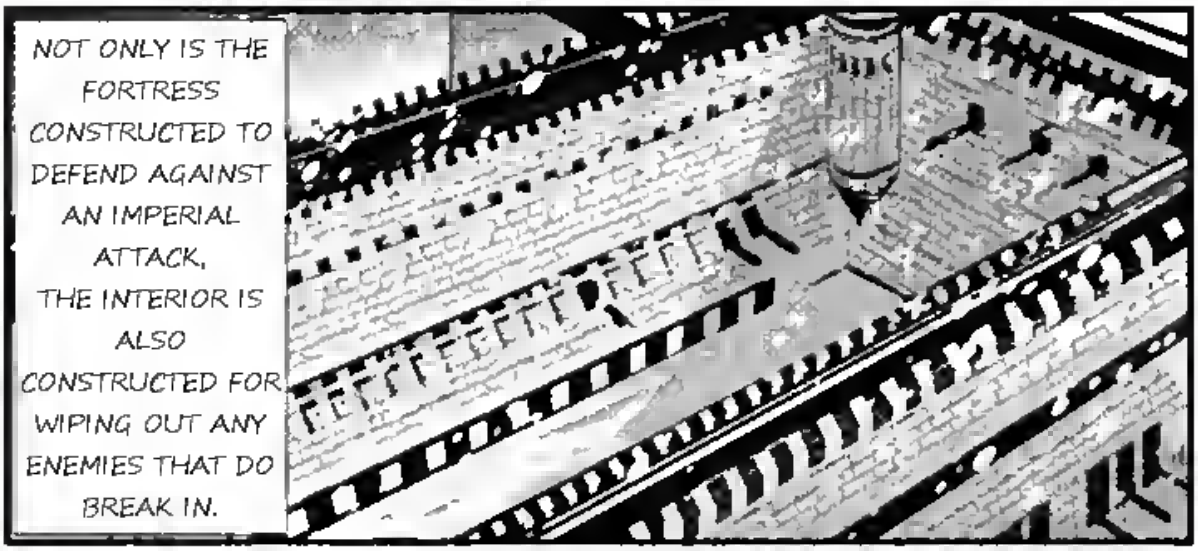
THIS POLICY HAS ONLY CEMENTED THE RIVALRY BETWEEN THE EMPIRE AND THE KINGDOM.
NOT ONLY THAT, THEY BELIEVE THAT THE OLD EMPIRE COLLAPSED BECAUSE OF THE OTHER RACES, AND THUS TREAT THEM AS SLAVES.


WHILE THEY LACKED MAGIC, THE NORTHERN LANDS THEY OWNED POSSESSED PLENTIFUL UNDERGROUND RESOURCES, SO WITH SCIENCE, THE EMPIRE BECAME A MAJOR POWER.

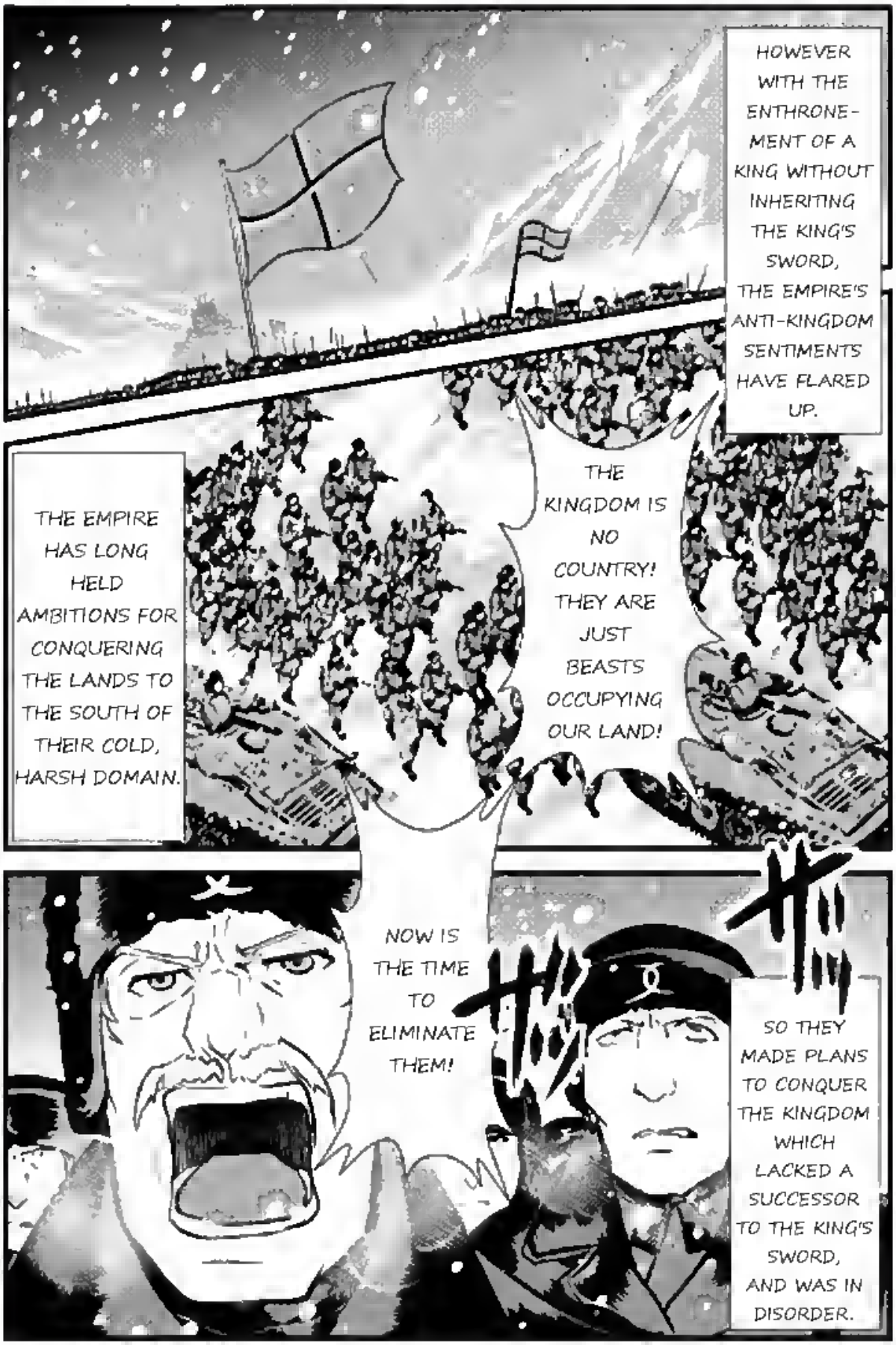
THEIR GREAT MILITARY POWER COMES FROM THEIR VAST MILITARY THAT OUTNUMBERS THE ARMIES OF OTHER COUNTRIES, AND THEIR EXCELLENT NON-MAGICAL WEAPONS.


CONSTRUCTED BETWEEN THE WHITE WOLF MOUNTAIN RANGE AND THE SIRIUS MOUNTAIN RANGE, THIS FORTRESS IS ALSO THE KINGDOM'S DEFENSE AGAINST THE EMPIRE.
PARATEON FORTRESS LIES 10KM SOUTH OF THE MILITARY DEMARCATION LINE THAT THE COUNTRIES TREAT AS A BORDER.

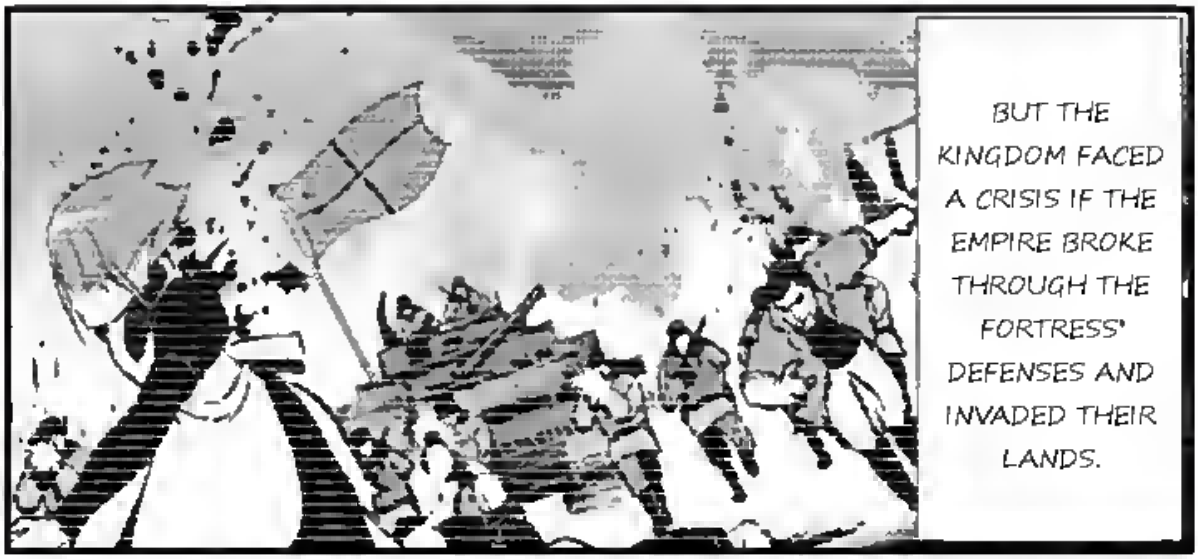
THE THREE CASTLES THAT THE FORTRESS IS COMPRISED OF EACH POSSESS A COMMAND TOWER, WITH THE THIRD CASTLE'S TOWER BEING IN CHARGE.

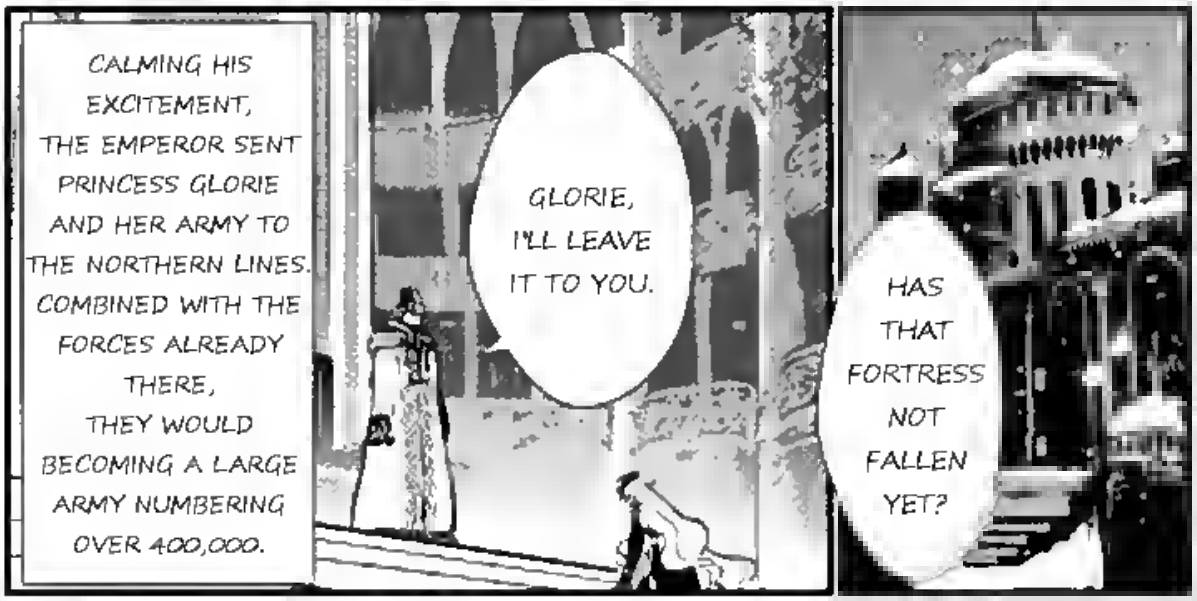

NOT ONLY IS THE FORTRESS CONSTRUCTED TO DEFEND AGAINST AN IMPERIAL ATTACK, THE INTERIOR IS ALSO CONSTRUCTED FOR WIPING OUT ANY ENEMIES THAT DO BREAK IN.

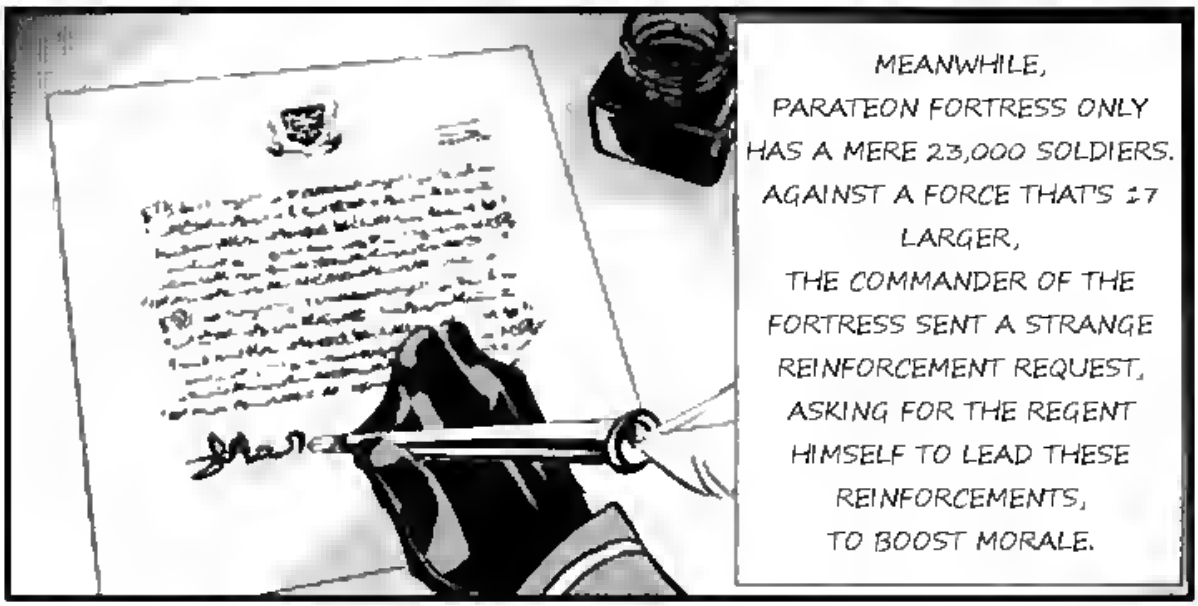
BECAUSE OF THEM, PARATEON IS KNOWN AS "THE IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS" AND HAS NOT ONCE YIELDED TO THE EMPIRE'S ATTACKS.
THE FORCES IN THE FORTRESS ARE ALSO A GATHERING OF THE ELITE,
MEANWHILE, THE VARIOUS KINGS THROUGH THE AGES HAVE ENSURED BALANCE IN THE REGION THROUGH POLITICS.
ON TOP OF THAT, THE KING'S SWORD HAS DETERRED A FULL-ON WAR FROM THE EMPIRE DUE TO ITS POWER.


HOWEVER WITH THE ENTHRONE-MENT OF A KING WITHOUT INHERITING THE KING'S SWORD, THE EMPIRE'S ANTI-KINGDOM SENTIMENTS HAVE FLARED UP.
THE EMPIRE HAS LONG HELD AMBITIONS FOR CONQUERING THE LANDS TO THE SOUTH OF THEIR COLD, HARSH DOMAIN.
THE KINGDOM IS NO COUNTRY! THEY ARE JUST BEASTS OCCUPYING OUR LAND!
NOW IS THE TIME TO ELIMINATE THEM!
SO THEY MADE PLANS TO CONQUER THE KINGDOM WHICH LACKED A SUCCESSOR TO THE KING'S SWORD, AND WAS IN DISORDER.

NOT RESTRICTED BY THEIR SUPPLY LINES BEING HAMPERED BY THE WINTER WEATHER, THE EMPIRE ATTACK PARATEON FORTRESS RELENTLESSLY, DAY AND NIGHT.
AGAINST THE EMPIRE'S ENDLESS STREAM OF SOLDIERS, THE KINGDOM'S SOLDIERS DEFENDED WELL.
WHAT A NASTY POLICY THE EMPIRE HAS, CALLING US BEASTS AND INVADING.
DO THEY THINK WE'LL JUST SIT AROUND WHILE THEY SHOOT US?!


BUT THE KINGDOM FACED A CRISIS IF THE EMPIRE BROKE THROUGH THE FORTRESS' DEFENSES AND INVADED THEIR LANDS.

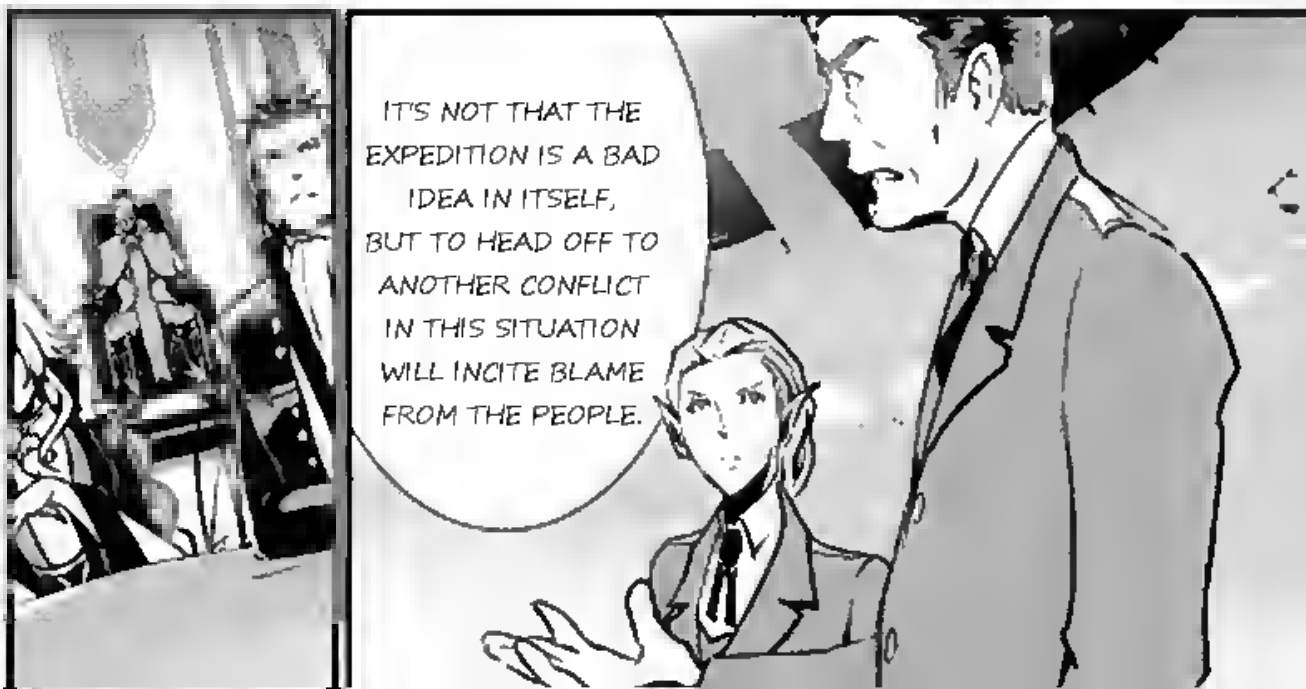

CALMING HIS EXCITEMENT, THE EMPEROR SENT PRINCESS GLORIE AND HER ARMY TO THE NORTHERN LINES. COMBINED WITH THE FORCES ALREADY THERE, THEY WOULD BECOMING A LARGE ARMY NUMBERING OVER 400,000.
GLORIE, I'LL LEAVE IT TO YOU.
HAS THAT FORTRESS NOT FALLEN YET?


MEANWHILE, PARATEON FORTRESS ONLY HAS A MERE 23,000 SOLDIERS. AGAINST A FORCE THAT'S 17 LARGER, THE COMMANDER OF THE FORTRESS SENT A STRANGE REINFORCEMENT REQUEST, ASKING FOR THE REGENT HIMSELF TO LEAD THESE REINFORCEMENTS, TO BOOST MORALE.

THE KINGDOM CURRENTLY CAN'T SUPPORT A WAR WITH THE EMPIRE.

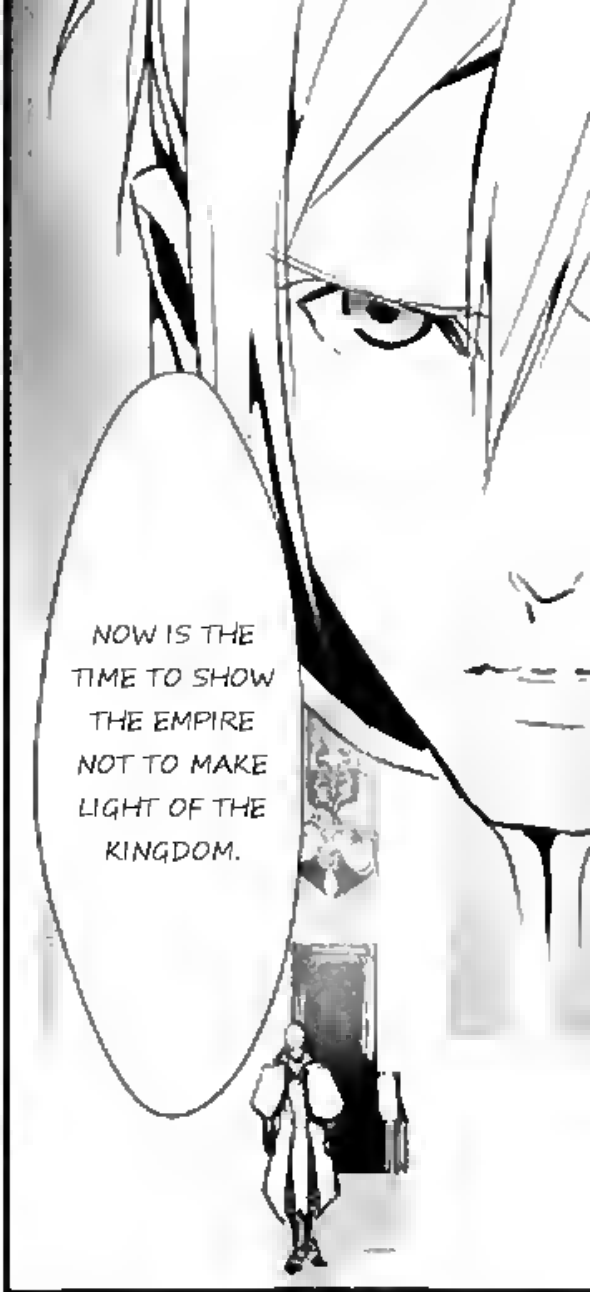
UPON HEARING THIS, THE SPECIAL MIRA PLAINS CONFERENCE WAS IN AN UPROAR.

THE KINGDOM WAS NEARLY BANKRUPT, AND THE HIGH OFFICIALS WERE TRYING TO CONVINCE LECTIVAL TO PRIORITIZE FIXING THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.
AND HIS HIGHNESS THE REGENT IS EFFECTIVELY OUR KING, SENDING HIM WOULD MAKE THIS A MILITARY EXPEDITION.


IT'S NOT THAT THE EXPEDITION IS A BAD IDEA IN ITSELF, BUT TO HEAD OFF TO ANOTHER CONFLICT IN THIS SITUATION WILL INCITE BLAME FROM THE PEOPLE.

OTHERS, HOWEVER, WERE ENCOURAGING LECTIVAL TO COMMAND THE ARMY AND ROYAL GUARD, AND LEAD THEM TO THE NORTH.
AND PRINCESS GLORIE'S ARMY IS IN HIGH SPIRITS.
HOWEVER, DEPENDING ON HIS HIGHNESS' REACTION, IT'S POSSIBLE THE EMPIRE WILL SIMPLY CONTINUE THEIR ASSAULT.
I BELIEVE DISPLAYING THE POWER OF THE KING'S SWORD AND THE REGULAR ARMY IS AN EFFECTIVE COUNTER-MEASURE.
IN PARTICULAR, THEY BELIEVED IN SHOWING THE WORLD THE STRENGTH OF THE REGULAR ARMY RETURNING UNDER THE COMMAND OF THE REGENT.
LET'S GO.
AND SHOULD THE FORTRESS FALL, INTERNAL AFFAIRS WILL BE THE LEAST OF OUR WORRIES.
THE EMPIRE HAD ATTACKED NOT LONG AFTER LECTIVAL'S INVESTITURE, WHILE HE WAS NOT YET USED TO THE KING'S SWORD.

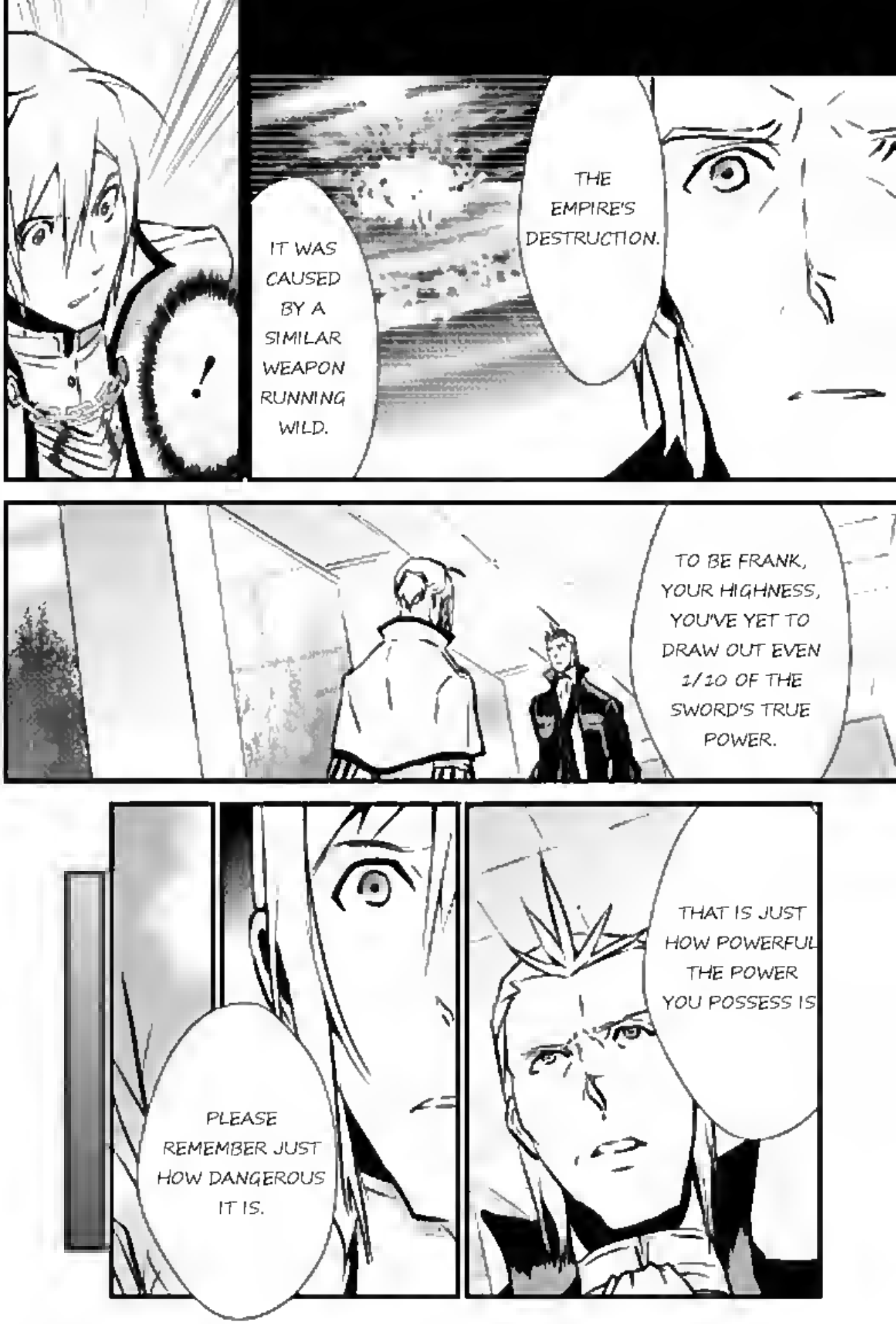
YOUR HIGHNESS,
HEADING TO THE FRONT YOURSELF IS A GREAT IDEA.
THE EMPIRE KNOW WELL HOW FEARSOME THE KING'S SWORD IS,
IT WAS CREATED BACK IN THE OLD EMPIRE AFTER ALL.


NOW IS THE TIME TO SHOW THE EMPIRE NOT TO MAKE LIGHT OF THE KINGDOM.

THE FIRST KING CREATED THE SWORD BY FUSING IT WITH THE POWER OF DRAGONS AND THE FOUR WORLDS' POWERS THAT GOVERNED THEM.
THE OLD EMPIRE POSSESSED THE TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE WEAPONS LIKE THE KING'S SWORD.

TO PREVENT THAT TRAGEDY FROM OCCURRING AGAIN...
HOWEVER, HE AND THOSE IN POWER AT THE TIME DESTROYED ALL RESEARCH RELATED TO SUCH WEAPONS,

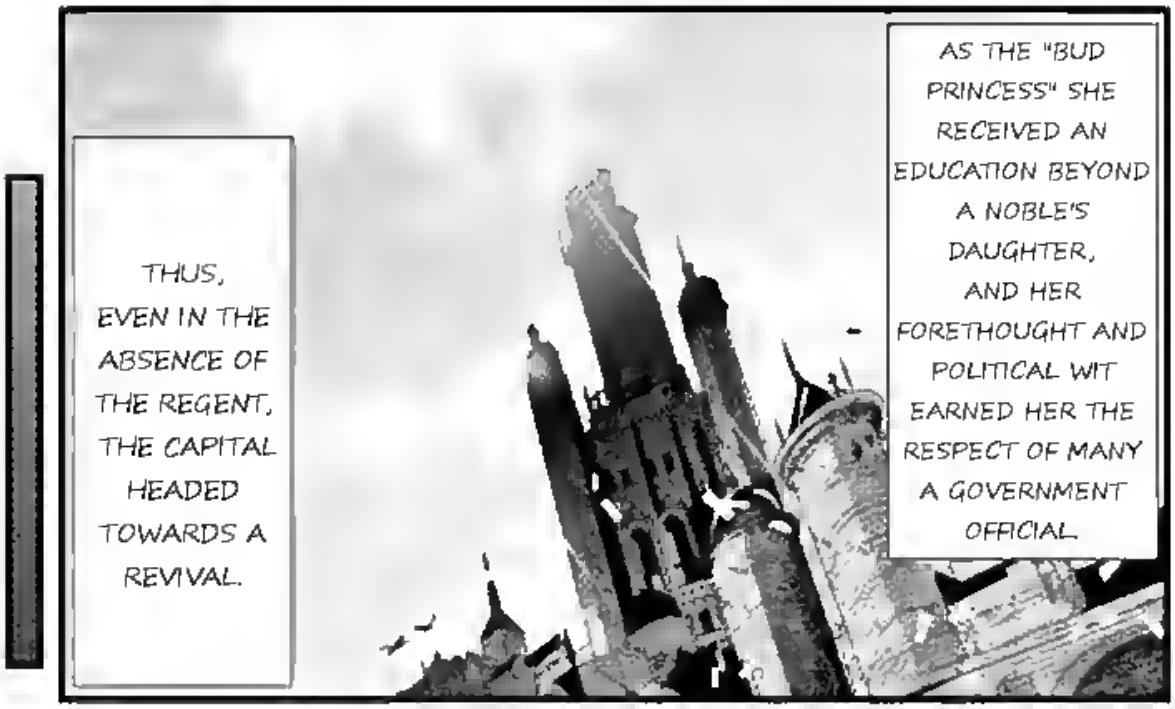
IT RESULTED IN
A TRAGEDY?

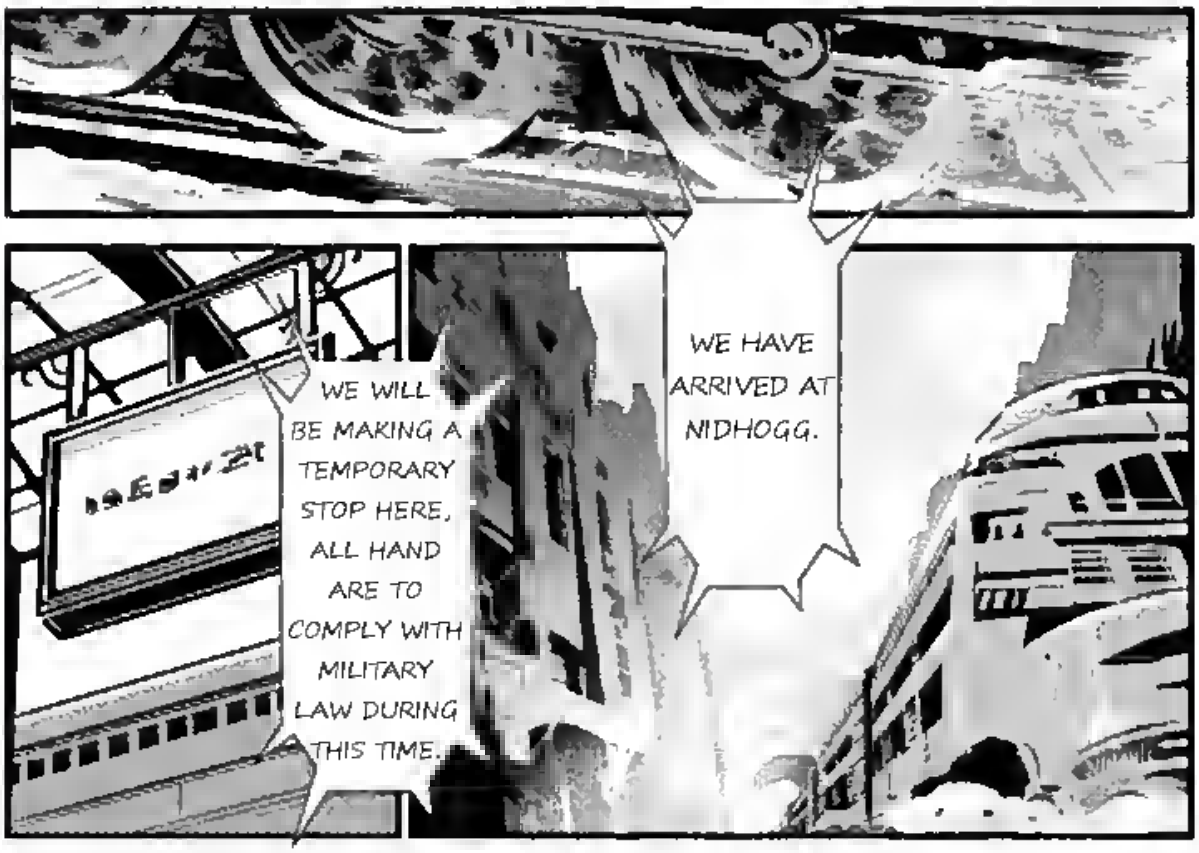

!
IT WAS CAUSED BY A SIMILAR WEAPON RUNNING WILD.
THE EMPIRE'S DESTRUCTION.
TO BE FRANK, YOUR HIGHNESS, YOU'VE YET TO DRAW OUT EVEN 1/10 OF THE SWORD'S TRUE POWER.
PLEASE REMEMBER JUST HOW DANGEROUS IT IS.
THAT IS JUST HOW POWERFUL THE POWER YOU POSSESS IS

THE IDEA WAS THAT AS THE ONE NEARLY GUARANTEED TO BE THE KING'S MAIN CONSORT, SHE COULD UNIFY PUBLIC SENTIMENT.
WHY SHOULD I GO TO THE CAPITAL BY MYSELF?!
ENTRUSTED BY LECTIVAL TO WATCH THE CASTLE IN HIS ABSENCE, THE COMMANDER OF THE ROYAL GUARD, BERFILE, INVITED THE SHRINE MAIDEN LILICIA FROM THE HOLY CITY TO JOIN THE INNER PALACE.
LILICIA,
I'LL GO TO THE NORTH TO JOIN MASTER LECTIVAL!
AND I'M SURE HIS HIGHNESS WILL BE PLEASED AS WELL.
WHO SAID THAT IT'S A WIFE'S JOB TO WATCH THE HOUSE WHILE THE HUSBAND'S OUT?
SUCH A SIMPLE GIRL
I'LL GO TO THE CAPITAL!

LECTIVAL HAD SUGGESTED FOR HER TO ALSO JOIN THE INNER PALACE,
BUT USING HER STATUS AS THE FAVORITE CONCUBINE, ARIA REFUSED AND INSTEAD DESIRED TO SECRETLY MOVE TO A VILLA.

AND SO, LILICIA JOINED THE INNER PALACE.


AS THE "BUD PRINCESS" SHE RECEIVED AN EDUCATION BEYOND A NOBLE'S DAUGHTER, AND HER FORETHOUGHT AND POLITICAL WIT EARNED HER THE RESPECT OF MANY A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL.
THUS, EVEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE REGENT, THE CAPITAL HEADED TOWARDS A REVIVAL.


WE HAVE ARRIVED AT NIDHOGG.
WE WILL BE MAKING A TEMPORARY STOP HERE, ALL HAND ARE TO COMPLY WITH MILITARY LAW DURING THIS TIME.

"NIDHOGG", THE CITY GOVERNED BY THE BLACK DRAGON DUCHESS, ANASTASHA. ORIGINALLY IT FLOURISHED FROM THE MINES, NOW IT'S AN INDUSTRIAL CITY FILLED WITH FIRMS MANAGING THE MINES, AND MILLS REFINING THE ORE.
LET'S GO FOR SOME DRINKS!
WE WILL DEPART TOMOR-ROW...
WOW.
YOUR HIGHNESS,
IT DEFINITELY DIFFERS FROM THE CAPITAL.

WE ARE HERE TO RECEIVE YOU.

THE BLACK DRAGON CLAN'S SERVANTS CERTAINLY DIFFER FROM THE WHITE DRAGON CLAN'S SERVANTS. BOTH THEIR CLOTHES AND THE ATMOSPHERE AROUND THEM
WE SHALL GUIDE YOU TO THE BLACK DRAGON PALACE.

DUCHESS ANASTASHA'S CASTLE. THE OBSIDIAN PALACE.
IS SUCH AN UNUSUAL BUILDING THAT EVEN FOREIGNERS COME TO SEE IT.

THESE ARE APPARENTLY RUINS EXCAVATED FROM THE MOUNTAIN AND MADE INTO A CASTLE.
THE GARDEN IS ALSO WONDER-FUL.
THE STYLE IS CERTAINLY NOTHING LIKE WHAT I'VE SEEN BEFORE.
WELCOME, YOUR HIGHNESS.
I SHALL GUIDE THE PRINCESS AND HER COMPANION ONWARDS.
IS IT FINE IF I TAKE A LOOK AT THE GARDEN?
PLEASE, GO AHEAD.

PRINCESS.
WHY?
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT NOT REMAINING IN THE CAPITAL?
ALSO, MADAM LILICIA WILL BE JOINING THE INNER PALACE.
THIS UPCOMING BATTLE WILL BE FAR MORE DANGEROUS.

IT'S FINE,
THIS IS A BATTLE YOU SHOULDN'T BE NEAR, AND YOU MOST DESERVE TO JOIN THE INNER PALACE.
AS DANGEROUS AS IT IS, I'M HAPPY TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE LECT.
DUCHESS...
SO NOW I'M OFFICIALLY LECT'S AIDE-DE-CAMP.
BESIDES, THE BLUE DRAGON DUCHESS, MARIA, TRANSFERED ME OVER TO THE ROYAL GUARD,

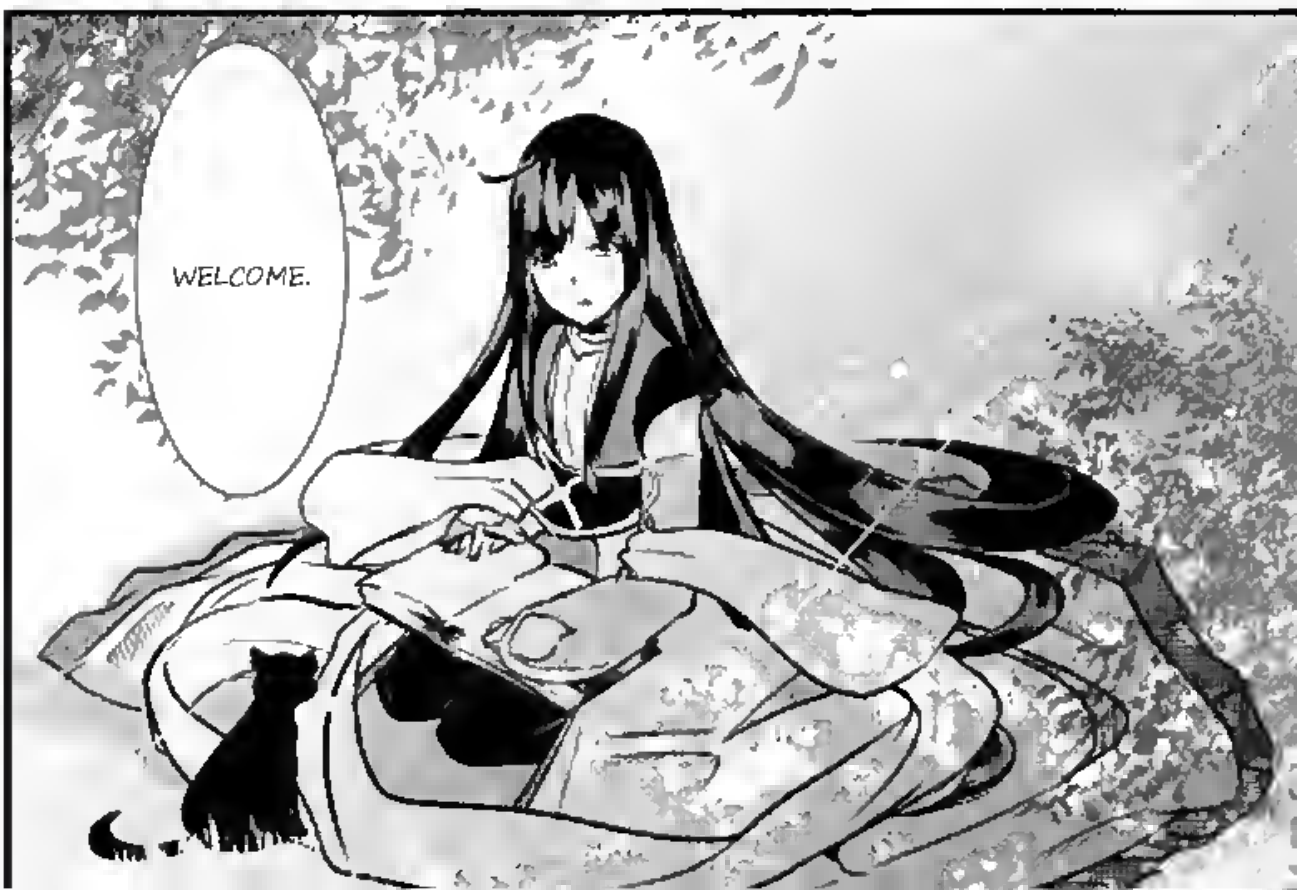
DESTROYED THE OLD EMPIRE...

皇剣の本当の力が…
THE SWORD'S TRUE POWER...

THAT IS JUST HOW POWERFUL THE POWER YOU POSSESS IS.

たとえ危険な力への不安があっても…
今は一刻も早くこの力を使いこなせるようにならないと…
AS DANGEROUS AS IT MAY BE, I NEED TO LEARN TO CONTROL IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE...

ニャー
A CAT?


WELCOME.